

# **FORT MACON STATE PARK PARK PROFILE**

## **PARK PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Fort Macon became the second North Carolina state park in 1924 when the United States deeded the fort and surrounding area to the state for one dollar, subject to a reverter clause requiring that the land be used as a public park. Local citizens, interested in increasing coastal tourism, supported establishing the park and developing visitor facilities. Until 1928, when a toll bridge from Morehead City to Bogue Banks was completed, visitors arrived by boat. By 1935, the Civilian Conservation Corps had improved public access by constructing a road to the fort and a boat dock. Governor J.C.B. Ehringhouse officially opened the park at a ceremony on May 1, 1936.

Fort Macon, constructed from 1826 to 1834 at a commanding location along Beaufort Inlet, exemplifies the Third System forts built to defend the east coast after the War of 1812. The pentagon-shaped fort's military purpose was to defend Beaufort harbor from attack by sea. In 1840, Robert E. Lee inspected the fort and recommended improvements, such as adding a jetty to control the beach erosion that had washed away Fort Hamilton. Fort Macon was garrisoned in three wars: the Civil War, the Spanish-American War and World War II. During the Civil War, local troops captured the fort from the one Union sergeant stationed there in April, 1861. During the next year, Confederate forces used the fort to successfully defend Beaufort harbor. Union troops recaptured Fort Macon on April 25, 1862, using mortars and rifled cannons. After the Civil War, the fort was used as a federal prison until 1877. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, an all-Black regiment, the Third North Carolina volunteers, staffed the fort. In World War II, the fort defended the coastline against German submarine attacks on Allied ships. Fort Macon was added to the National Register of Historic Places in February 1970.

Recreational resources of statewide significance are centered around Fort Macon and the beach. The restored 19th-century fort provides historical education opportunities that are not available elsewhere in North Carolina, and the park's diverse coastal environment provides a broad range of educational opportunities. The undeveloped beach slopes gently into the usually calm ocean. These conditions create a prime location for beach activities, non-motorized water sports, swimming, fishing, bird watching and walking. The natural setting also provides a tranquil experience away from the development found elsewhere on Bogue Banks. The park offers one of the few ocean beaches on the East Coast accessible to mobility-impaired people.

The most significant biological resources are found in the Fort Macon Registered Natural Heritage Area, a 350-acre area that includes all the undisturbed land in the park. The area encompasses a sound-to-sea section of a barrier island and includes active and relict dunes, swales, salt marshes and fresh water ponds. As other sites along Bogue Banks are used for commercial and residential development, this natural area becomes increasingly important. A high diversity of migratory bird species visit the park and its significant nesting habitat. The skipper butterfly, found only at the coast, and the seabeach amaranth, a plant on the federal list of threatened species, live in the park.

The broad expanse of seashore, with its rolling surf, dunes, waterfowl and expansive horizon, is a scenic resource of statewide significance. Maritime forests and marsh areas dominate the park's landscape and provide rare vistas that were commonplace only 50 years ago. The east-west orientation of Bogue Banks creates an unusual opportunity to view sunsets over the Atlantic Ocean. In addition, the original vistas from the fort have been restored to provide a view of the ocean and Beaufort Inlet. These vistas give a park visitor a clear understanding of the fort's former role in controlling boat traffic entering Beaufort Harbor. Many people today are drawn to the park simply to watch the boats moving through the inlet, much like the sentries who once stood guard at the fort.

Significant geological resources include the dune formations and salt marsh that are increasingly rare on the North Carolina Coast. The park's location at the eastern tip of Bogue Banks exhibits the interaction between the sound, inlet and coast line as well as the related sand movement.

Fort Macon was authorized as a state park so its valuable archaeological, recreational, biological, scenic and geological values could be protected. The Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving these values and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of North Carolina's natural heritage.

### PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

**The Fort:** Construction of Fort Macon began in 1826 and the fort was garrisoned in 1834. At the start of the Civil War, North Carolina seized the fort from Union forces but it was later recaptured in 1862 during the only major battle involving Fort Macon. After the Civil War, the fort was a federal prison, then garrisoned again during the Spanish-American War. In 1924, Fort Macon became North Carolina's second state park. The Civilian Conservation Corps restored the fort in 1934-35 and it was garrisoned for a final time during World War II. Interpretation and education programming highlights living conditions at the fort, different uses of the fort throughout history, the fort's architecture and its military history.

**Barrier Island Dynamics:** The geologic evolution of the barrier islands is the second primary theme. Major concepts include theories of barrier island formation and migration over time, dune movement and erosion, natural communities adapted to specific barrier island habitats and human impacts on barrier island dynamics. The Environmental Education Learning Experience (EELE) for the park focuses on barrier islands with activities for middle grades.

### STATISTICS

|                             |            |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Visitation (1999)           | 1,260,754  |
| Operating Budget (FY 98-99) | \$ 476,658 |
| Revenue (FY 98-99)          | \$ 41,304  |

### VISITOR FACILITIES

|                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Historic fort             | Hiking trail (0.4 mile) |
| Bathhouse/concession area | Fishing                 |
| Picnic areas and shelters | Sun shelter             |

## CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION NEEDS

|               |   |                    |
|---------------|---|--------------------|
| 1             | The <b>remaining fort restoration work</b> project would complete restoration of the fort by undertaking repairs not included in Phases IA and IB, now underway. Full-time construction supervision is also included. Because of the high cost of renovations, the remaining work may be undertaken in phases.  | \$8,965,004        |
| 2             | The <b>designer for visitor center exhibits</b> project provides a design fee for exhibits to go in the proposed new visitor center. The design should be undertaken when visitor center construction is imminent.  | 200,643            |
| 3             | The <b>visitor center</b> project includes an archeological survey of the visitor center site, extension of underground electric and water lines, repaving of walkways to the fort, exhibits for the visitor center, projection equipment for the auditorium and construction of a unique design visitor center.  | 6,051,790          |
| 4             | The <b>bathhouse renovations</b> project provides renovations to the bathhouse—constructed in 1981—include removing and replacing all decking, adding additional bathrooms to serve existing demand, demolition of the basket area, general renovations, replacement of siding, septic system expansion and waterline distribution.   | 869,907            |
| 5             | The <b>ranger residences renovations/add garages</b> project provides for general renovations to three older ranger residences and the addition of three garages needed to protect vehicles from the harsh coastal environment.   | 240,986            |
| 6             | The <b>burial of all park powerlines</b> project includes removing fifty old poles and lines and replacing them with underground service. The line crossing the dunes will be relocated, and a short section of powerline at the Coast Guard station will be buried. Burial of the powerlines should result in fewer power interruptions, improved aesthetics and public safety, as well as helping to satisfy Land and Water Conservation Fund program requirements. | 232,861            |
| 7             | The <b>barracks building #2</b> project will add additional sleeping quarters and restrooms for seasonal staff. Existing common areas and kitchen facilities are adequate. In addition to serving temporary housing needs, the barracks can be used outside the visitor season for staff training and meetings.   | 383,111            |
| <b>TOTAL:</b> |   | <hr/> \$16,944,303 |

## REGISTERED NATURAL HERITAGE AREA

**Fort Macon Registered Natural Heritage Area:** The Fort Macon Registered Natural Heritage Area covers 350 acres and encompasses the entire park with the exception of the areas that are developed with recreational facilities or the fort. The natural area provides a good example of typical sea-to-sound barrier island community developed over the various geological and topographical features of the island. The high, continuous line of dunes supports a Dune Grass natural community dominated by sea oats and seaside little bluestem. The interior portion supports a Maritime Shrub natural community which is a dense thicket of coastal red cedar, stunted live oak and loblolly pine, yaupon and wax myrtle. There are small pockets of Maritime Forest with similar species but a taller canopy. The sound side of the park has a Salt Marsh dominated by saltmarsh cordgrass.

## FUTURE LAND ACQUISITION NEEDS

Completion of the Fort Macon State Park master plan will require the acquisition of 4 acres. Additional park acreage is needed to buffer the park entrance along N.C. Highway 58 to protect the aesthetics of the area. By acquiring ten acres around the entrance, we can protect the area from becoming residential.

|                           |                  |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Master Plan Total Acreage | 393 acres        |
| Current Park Acreage      | <u>389 acres</u> |
| <b>Acquisition Needs</b>  | <b>4 acres</b>   |

## 1999 STAFF POSITIONS

| Permanent               |    | Seasonal                |   | Peak Load               |   |
|-------------------------|----|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| Park Superintendent III | 1  | Park Attendant          | 2 | Park Attendant          | 4 |
| Park Ranger III         | 1  | Chief Lifeguard         | 1 | Lifeguard               | 1 |
| Park Ranger II          | 2  | Lifeguard               | 5 | Refreshment Stand Clerk | 1 |
| Maintenance Mechanic IV | 11 | Refreshment Stand       | 1 | Historian               | 1 |
| Maintenance Mechanic II |    | Manager I               |   |                         |   |
| General Utility Worker  | 1  | Bathhouse Manager I     | 1 |                         |   |
| Office Assistant III    | 1  | Refreshment Stand Clerk | 2 |                         |   |
|                         |    | Park Historian          | 1 |                         |   |
|                         |    | Park Attendant          | 1 |                         |   |

## PROPOSED STAFF ADDITIONS

| Permanent               |   | Seasonal               |   | Peak Load |  |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------|--|
| Park Ranger II          | 1 | Park Attendant         | 3 |           |  |
| Park Ranger III         | 1 | General Utility Worker | 1 |           |  |
| Maintenance Mechanic II | 1 | Lifeguard              | 6 |           |  |
| General Utility Worker  | 1 | Naturalist             | 1 |           |  |
| Office Assistant IV     | 1 | Office Assistant       | 1 |           |  |
| Office Assistant III    | 1 |                        |   |           |  |